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Delivering Aid: Implementing Progressive Era Welfare in the American West

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corah Posten, in the years 1919–1922, and was subsequently published in book form. Orm Øverland's admirable English translation appears in a durable half-buckram binding. The story is fast paced, the characterizations finely nuanced and full of human insight.

Jonas Olsen arrives in Minneapolis from Norway in the 1880s and works his way up from laborer to grocer. His methods are not always above board, but *bisnes* is *bisnes* in booming America. When his grocery store goes bankrupt in the Panic of 1893, Jonas and his charming bride, Ragna, go into farming in the Red River Valley. The railroad comes through, and Jonas competes with the overbearing Elihu Ward to lay out a new town, with lots of shenanigans on both sides. The novel ends with Jonas as the tycoon of Jonasville around 1910, locked in a fierce rivalry with Ward's town of Normanville to become the county seat and dominate local affairs.

Unlike grim classics of Scandinavian immigrant life such as O. E. Rølvaag's *Giants in the Earth*, this novel sparkles with humor, and it deals with immigrants who cope successfully (though not without difficulties) with American farming, small towns, and urban life. It describes a rich multicultural panorama of midwestern immigrant life, literature, and culture. This is a marvelous Scandinavian American novel, well worth your time and money. It deserves to stand next to Rølvaag on your bookshelf.

Delivering Aid: Implementing Progressive Era Welfare in the American West, by Thomas A. Krainz. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005. xiv, 325 pp. Illustrations, appendix of tables, notes, index. \$37.50 cloth.

Reviewer Joan Gittens is professor of history at Southwest Minnesota State University. She is the author of *Poor Relations: The Children of the State in Illinois, 1818–1990* (1994).

In *Delivering Aid*, Thomas Krainz sets out to determine whether the social welfare theories developing during the Progressive Era had an impact on public assistance as it was actually experienced by needy people in Colorado. Colorado is a useful focus of study, Krainz argues, because it experienced so many conditions that made the Progressive Era the time of turmoil that it was: immigration, labor struggles, and political contests between reformers and entrenched politicians. Krainz examines six counties in Colorado, representing a wide range of conditions, from urban Denver to Costilla County in southwest Colorado (peopled largely by a long resident Hispanic population) to Montezuma County (30 percent of which was made up of the Moun-

tain Ute Indian Reservation). Other populations within his six counties were miners and farmers.

Krainz questions recent historical work that, he believes, focuses too exclusively on the social welfare theory that was developing during the Progressive Era and not enough on actual delivery of aid. His contention is that, despite the energy given to innovative and very popular notions such as mothers' pensions during that era and the importance accorded to case work executed by trained social workers, when it came to actual delivery of services, things changed very little for poor people in the counties he studied. Local conditions, he argues, whether the strong family support system and church-related support of Costilla County or the political activities of Denver, had far more to do with what actually happened to clients than any of the theories touted at the National Conference of Charities and Corrections meetings (some of whose meetings actually took place in Denver).

Krainz describes blind pensions as the one genuinely innovative welfare reform in Colorado. The control of blind pensions was actually in the hands of the lobby for blind people and, as a result, was far more uniform and generous in the granting of pensions with far fewer strings attached than were other types of aid. Blind people did far better under this system than they had previously done. But even blind pensions fell victim to the combined assault of conservative 1920s politics, coupled with the fears of some advocates for blind people that pensions eroded efforts to employ them. Even with this brief success, Progressive Era theory could not trump the complexity and intransigence of local circumstances.

Krainz successfully demonstrates his main contention, but that overarching theme is not the most striking thing about his book. The gap between policy as written and policy as it is really practiced is a dreary constant of social welfare history, evidenced in studies of mothers' pensions and the juvenile court done by the Children's Bureau and other investigatory agencies as early as the 1920s. Krainz himself notes in his introduction that when he worked as a social worker, he was always struck by the gap between notions of what was "best practice" in social welfare theory compared to the difficult reality for clients negotiating a complicated and often unresponsive system.

What is really impressive in Krainz's book is the level and breadth of investigation that he undertook, his diligence in uncovering information, and the rich particulars with which he bolsters his argument. Krainz describes visiting more than a third of Colorado's county courthouses in pursuit of his evidence, literally crawling and climbing to reach long forgotten records. His story of those dependent on the

vagaries of public mercy is sometimes patchy, owing to the dearth of material. But collectively it makes for a powerful story that accords poor people a presence and a voice. Krainz emphasizes the issues unique to Colorado—the impact of mining, for example, the struggles of “dry farmers,” or the poignant story of “lungers” (the desperate victims of tuberculosis who moved to Denver as a last attempt at a cure and posed such a challenge to the city’s social welfare system). At the same time, he puts Colorado firmly into the broader context of social welfare in the Progressive Era. *Delivering Aid* is written in a clear and engaging style, with a command of a broad range of materials, meticulous documentation, and an appendix full of tables that detail the results of those searches through courthouse records. It will be of interest to historians of social welfare and historians of the American West.

Labor, Loyalty, and Rebellion: Southwestern Illinois Coal Miners and World War I, by Carl R. Weinberg. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 2005. xvi, 246 pp. Illustrations, map, notes, index. \$55.00 cloth, \$27.00 paper.

Reviewer Bill R. Douglas lives and works in Des Moines. He has written several articles on antiwar activity in Iowa, including “Penn in Technicolor” (forthcoming in *Quaker History*).

Labor, Loyalty, and Rebellion is about three obscure downstate Illinois counties, some coal miners’ strikes, and—oh, yes—a lynching. The author’s conclusion? “Both on the battlefields of Europe and on home-fronts worldwide, World War I incited in large numbers of working people a mindless hatred of each other” (151). Weinberg’s success in demonstrating this conclusion represents a triumph of local history. Good local and regional history is more difficult than national generalizations in that it needs to relate particulars to the more abstract strands of national policy and practice.

Other historians have been accumulating local and regional evidence against any public consensus in favor of waging World War I. Jeannette Keith, in *Rich Man’s War, Poor Man’s Fight: Race, Class, and Power in the Rural South during the First World War* (2004), makes the case for the opposition of the rural South, as does Christopher Gibbs in *The Great Silent Majority: Missouri’s Resistance to World War I* (1988), though he overreaches in the subtitle by classifying skepticism as resistance. Some day—soon, we may hope—someone will synthesize the local discontent and why it failed to stop the war; meanwhile, we have fine local analyses such as Weinberg’s.